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Can Mindfulness Be Helpful in Team Decision-Making?

A Framework for Understanding How to Mitigate False Consensus

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Abstract

Mindfulness has recently attracted a great deal of interest in the field of management. However, even though mindfulness – broadly viewed as a state of active awareness – has been described mainly at the individual level, it may also have important effects at aggregated levels. In this article, we adopt a team-based conceptualization of mindfulness, and develop a framework that represents the powerful effect of team mindfulness on facilitating effective decision-making. We further discuss how a conceptualization of team mindfulness may mitigate the process of false consensus by interacting positively with the following five central team processes: open-mindedness, participation, empowerment, conflict management, and value and ambiguity tolerance. A false consensus constitutes a cognitive bias, leading to the perception of a consensus that does not exist. In essence, we argue that, although a conceptualization of team mindfulness does not guarantee effective decision-making in itself, it may successfully reduce false consensus when coupled with these five team processes. Accordingly, this article contributes to the theory and practice of team decision-making by demonstrating how a conceptualization of team mindfulness can be helpful in the increasingly complex and ambiguous situations faced by contemporary teams.

Keywords: team mindfulness; false consensus; organizations; sense-making.

Can Mindfulness Be Helpful in Team Decision-Making?

A Framework for Understanding how to Mitigate False Consensus

In recent decades, the notion of mindfulness has received increasing attention in management research. Several organizational studies have thus contextualized the relevance of the concept in connection to specific issues, such as sense-making and organizational attention (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999; Fiol & O'Connor, 2003; Reb & Atkins, 2015; Purser, 2016). The reason for this novel interest in mindfulness among organizational scholars is that certain phenomena, such as attention, reflection, openness, and conflict management have become imperative for understanding how processes, such as team decision-making, in organizations function. Positioned at the centre of the debate, conceptualizations of mindfulness have remained both flexible and multifunctional. Mindfulness is broadly defined as an active awareness characterized by the continual creation and refinement of categories, an openness to new information, and a willingness to view contexts from multiple perspectives (Langer, 1989, 1997; Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000; Ryle, 1990; Reb & Atkins, 2015; Purser, 2016).

Importantly, many of the most significant recent attempts to theorize mindfulness have neglected its team aspect. In the present paper, we hence show that conceptualizing mindfulness at the team level implies teams that are more controlled and stable in their attention, which has a positive influence on effective coordination and sharing of mental models (Dane, 2011; Good et al., 2016; Metiu & Rothbard, 2012). However, little is currently known about the conceptual mechanisms that produce these effects.

It has been suggested that certain factors, such as reluctance to simplify interpretations, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, under-specification of structure, and preoccupation with failure all contribute to a state of team mindfulness (Weick et al., 1999; Fiol & O'Connor, 2003; Hafenbrack, Kinias, & Barsade, 2014; Ostafin &

Kassman, 2012; Papies, Barsalou, & Custers, 2012; Reb & Narayanan, 2014). This observation can be extended by noticing that organizational practices that facilitate a state of team mindfulness include active socialization through vivid storytelling (Weick & Roberts, 1993), continuous training and simulations of rare events, and empowerment through the delegation of authority.

The immediate aims of this article, then, are to explore how a model of team mindfulness can facilitate the decision-making process of the team. Theoretically, this study's central contribution is a preliminary conceptualization of how team mindfulness may facilitate the reduction of false consensus, which constitutes a significant pitfall in team decision-making. More specifically, we ask how a conceptualization of team mindfulness may counteract people's tendency to 'see their own behavioral choices and judgments as relatively common and appropriate to existing circumstances while viewing alternative responses as uncommon, deviant, or inappropriate' (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977, p. 280).

In essence, the false-consensus effect is an attributional type of cognitive bias, whereby people tend to overestimate the extent to which their opinions, beliefs, preferences, values, and habits are normal and typical. This cognitive bias tends to lead to the perception of a consensus that does not exist, i.e., a 'false consensus'. A false consensus can convince a team to ignore information coming from the outside and lure members into feeling overly sure of themselves. It can thus lead to several problems in decision-making, such as not taking various alternatives sufficiently into account, not considering various objectives thoroughly enough, and not evaluating the decisions made. Other problems connected to false consensus relate to the high degree of selectivity in the gathering of information, lack of criticism of each other's ideas, and lack of transparency (Thompson, 2008).

The false consensus effect differs from the confirming evidence trap and from overconfidence by its profoundly social nature. Therefore, it is influenced by how team

members integrate information from each other into their own valuation process due to, for instance, social conformity. Therefore, different motives stemming from team members interdependencies and social identities also have an impact (Hammond, Keeney, & Raiffa, 1998; Bazerman & Moore, 2013).

Most broadly, this article aims to contribute to the conceptualization of mindfulness at the team level, with a particular focus on precisely how it affects false consensus. Although some studies have investigated mindfulness at the organizational level, research on team mindfulness as an influencer of team behaviour is scarce, mainly because scholars have focused predominantly on mindfulness measured as an individual capability. Our study, however, contributes a framework of *how* a conceptualization of team mindfulness can be helpful in reducing false consensus in team decision-making processes. Thus far, there have been few attempts to develop an integrative framework describing what team mindfulness consists of, how it unfolds, and how it may mitigate processes, such as false consensus.

The organization of the paper is as follows. We start by clarifying the concepts of team mindfulness and false consensus. Next, we explain how a conceptualization of team mindfulness can be helpful in reducing false consensus, and we introduce our conceptual framework along with five propositions. We conclude by discussing the theoretical and practical implications of our model, as well as identifying directions for future research.

Team Mindfulness

The Concept of Team Mindfulness

Team mindfulness has been conceptualized as a flexible state of mind, in which team members are actively engaged in the present, notice new things, and are sensitive to context. The definition underlines the fact that a mindful team member is not bound by prescribed, rigid categories. Instead, he or she demonstrates substantial flexibility and perceives how seismic shifts in the environment can alter the meaning of a particular idea or behaviour. This

appreciation has engendered an improved conceptualization of how the mindful team member uses his or her awareness of multiple contexts to approach potential problems creatively (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). Consequently, the case can be made that conceptualizing team mindfulness involves iterations of analysis and synthesis between seeing more (distinction making) and seeing differently (context shifting).

Complementing these observations, we argue that a conceptualization of team mindfulness plays a pivotal role as a property of the team, including present-focused attention and experiential processing (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). It is also essential that team mindfulness is developed in the team through experience, with the ability to affect team interactions (Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001; Marks et al., 2001; van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Homan, 2013; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Evidently, the concept of team mindfulness denotes the ability of teams to notice significant details, to perceive errors as they occur, and to gain the requisite shared expertise and freedom to act on perceived phenomena (Weick et al., 1999). Central and important outcomes include (1) improving the quality and quantity of attention directed towards significant details and errors in work processes and environments, (2) refining existing categories with new information, (3) drawing out new distinctions from a multitude of organizational events, and (4) reframing contextual understandings in the face of a changing world (Langer, 1989; Weick et al., 1999).

Most obviously, team members often expend a considerable amount of effort collaborating and communicating with each other to achieve consensus on a shared representation structure (Klein, Moon, & Hoffman, 2006; Sonenschein, 2007). Indeed, positive outcomes of team mindfulness are contingent upon the ability of the participants to collectively generate interaction orders that are conducive to a working consensus (Patriotta & Spedale, 2009). In this regard, sense-giving mechanisms, such as leadership, can

constructively orient interactions among professionals by providing a common set of expectations regarding behaviours (Patriotta & Spedale, 2009).

The extant research, however, leaves many questions about the conceptualization of team mindfulness unanswered. Much of the terminology used in conceptualizations of team mindfulness also lacks a coherent definition. By comparison, there is an absence of differentiation between creative construction and self-observation. It is the case that the concepts of attention and awareness seem to be frequently conflated and often used interchangeably. Of course, these concepts should be clearly distinguished, as attention refers to an ever-changing factor of consciousness, while awareness signifies a stable and specific state of consciousness.

Team Mindfulness and Consensus

Bearing in mind that definitional progress and convergence may well continue, we recognize that teams frequently have to make crucial decisions, and maintain that mindfulness plays a central role in the decision-making process (Peterson, Owens, Tetlock, Fan, & Martorana, 1998; Bauman & Geher, 2002; Thompson, 2008). On the other hand, team decision-making processes are often challenging, because members have diverse preferences and perspectives. Briefly, as a team makes decisions, it is likely to encounter diverse opinions from members with different functional backgrounds and organizational affiliations. When the team attempts to combine diverse opinions into a joint decision, it typically makes use of consensus as its decision rule (Peterson et al., 1998; Bauman & Geher, 2002; Thompson, 2008). Above all, team members seek an alternative that all members can accept, even though this alternative may not be the first choice of all members (Guzzo & Dickson, 1996).

According to Marks and Miller (1987), four mechanisms are able to explain the presence of false consensus. First, estimates of similarity between the self and others are positively influenced by the ease with which relevant instances are brought to mind. Second,

people tend to focus more on their preferred position than on alternative positions. Third, internal versus external attribution processes may lead to false attributions (Heider, 1958). Fourth, motivated cognition may play a role, such that the greater the degree to which the furthering of one's goals is affected by social support, agreement, or social validation, the more weight is given to consensus cues.

It is well established that conceptualizations of team mindfulness have an impact on all four of these mechanisms. As a result, they are able to reduce false consensus. Recent research results suggest that both attention and reflectivity play a vital role in how relevance, preference, attribution, and motivated cognition are constructed among team members (van Knippenberg, van Ginkel, & Homan, 2013; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

The Framework

Can Team Mindfulness Mitigate False Consensus?

We next address the fact that the process of reaching consensus and making a decision can be complex. It is true that the reduction of false consensus is, in numerous ways, the key to fruitful sense-making processes. One could also add that a set of guidelines may facilitate a team's search for constructive consensus processes. In general, to decrease false consensus, team members are encouraged to focus on reflectivity, i.e., to acknowledge that decision-making constitutes a multifaceted process that requires deep thought, rather than a mirroring of others' actions and opinions in a taken-for-granted or confirmatory manner. In addition, the reduction of false consensus is characterized by a high degree of attentive presence, wherein paying attention to the given purpose in the present moment is essential. This most often implies a rich awareness of discriminatory details.

We also identify two basic challenges facing teams that aim to reduce false consensus. First, the team needs to elicit each team member's true preferences and opinions – otherwise,

the team risks developing a ‘counterfeit’, or false, consensus. Second, the team must effectively integrate different preferences and opinions into a joint decision. Due in part to the complex process of sense-making in group settings, it may be very challenging to combine preferences that arise from different frames of reference. Consequently, conceptualizations of team mindfulness require processes that assist the team to move from merely reflexive processes (e.g., mirroring each other’s views based on a false understanding of preferences) to more reflective processes that build on open-minded approaches, and thoughtful considerations and discussions among all team members.

A parallel range of considerations emerges in the presentation of our model. The model’s most important feature is that it breaks with the notion of individual-level mindfulness. Previous conceptualizations have attempted to relate mindfulness to teams based solely on the behaviours of individuals (Weick et al., 1999; Sutcliffe et al., 2016; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). In these conceptualizations, social theory almost always begins from individual action, neglecting interaction. Indeed, downplaying the role of interaction, it has been a central aim to determine how team phenomena arise as a consequence of individual action. Moreover, the whole relationship between individuals and teams is not always additive in nature. Studies reveal that, as individuals interact, the team factors that may result will not meaningfully be reduced to individuals (Weick et al., 1999; Sutcliffe et al., 2016; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

We therefore identify five team processes, on which we elaborate below, that relate to a new conceptualization of team mindfulness: open-mindedness, participation, empowerment, conflict management, and value-ambiguity tolerance. The proposed framework is a response to calls made in previous investigations for a more systematic approach to team mindfulness (Weick et al., 1999; Sutcliffe et al., 2016; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). It is important to note

that the suggested processes are to be regarded as descriptive accounts of successful avenues, rather than normative recommendations.

To the extent that this is the case, we argue that a conceptualization of team mindfulness will more effectively reduce false consensus when it is coupled with other processes. The reason for this is that, although team mindfulness has a demonstrated ability to weaken emotional reactions to negative stimuli, its capacity to dampen emotional reactions to positive stimuli is limited (Brown, Goodman, & Inzlicht, 2013; Desbordes, Negi, Pace, Wallace, Raison, & Schwartz, 2012; Taylor et al., 2011). In addition, emotional reactions to positive stimuli are often key to the production of false consensus in teams. Therefore, in the following section, we point to a conceptual framework (see Figure 1) that may be helpful in avoiding the pitfall of false consensus.

(Insert Figure 1 about here)

Why team mindfulness strengthens the ability of open-mindedness to reduce false consensus

One of the first steps in reducing false consensus is the simple recognition that differences exist among team members with regard not only to decision preferences, but also to assumptions that underlie the present issue(s). As these differences are acknowledged, members may inquire into the reasons underlying the diversity of viewpoints. In order to proceed from understanding the different perspectives of others to accepting the legitimacy of alternative viewpoints, it is therefore critical to allow other members to clarify their ideas and provide rationales for their interpretations (Wong, Ormiston, & Tetlock, 2011). In certain situations, team members may even experience a complete reversal or gestalt shift in their frame of reference by adopting a perspective that is opposite to the one with which they began. As a result, preferences may become more similar over time. Furthermore, team interpretations of key events will transition from unformed and tentative to well-constructed

and well-processed viewpoints. In part, this is because mindfulness, defined as ‘a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience’, has been shown to help individuals stay on task, approach problems with an open mind, and avoid taking disagreements personally. This is an issue of pragmatic relevance, and the trend is so strong that many major corporations have begun instituting mindfulness programs (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

In terms of style, open-minded team members often engender a willingness to question current thinking and practice. More specifically, such members are receptive to emerging possibilities. This characteristic often results in a willingness to learn about differences, and to listen carefully and sincerely to other team members without prejudices. Open-minded team members also appear to be adaptable, meaning that they are amenable to ideas generated by team members from varied cultural backgrounds. Moreover, they are willing to work in novel ways, learn about and try new things, and take up new challenges (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Notably, the most important action that organizations can take to increase team mindfulness is to encourage present-focused attention, non-judgmental processing and respectful communication, as well as an openness to collecting and understanding information prior to processing it. In addition, these characteristics assist to reduce emotional or reflexive responses, making it possible for teams with diverse knowledge and different functional backgrounds to become more successful (Wong et al., 2011; Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

The considerations presented above suggest that team members approach decision situations with different preferences. However, it must be noted that only limited knowledge exists about how different members attempt to communicate with, understand, and challenge each other and to capitalize on each other’s preferences. Frequently, teams consist of members with varied functional backgrounds, and this heterogeneity is likely to serve as a

resource in the decision-making process. It is only helpful, however, if the members can communicate, negotiate, and develop various preferences in constructive ways. For example, it can sometimes be useful to encourage team members to imagine that they are representing other parties with an interest in the decision (Turner & Pratkanis, 1998).

A core tenet of most teamwork is that the application of open-mindedness requires a high degree of attentive presence, wherein a focus on the present moment is essential. In this context, a rich awareness of discriminatory detail is imperative (Barry & Meisiek, 2010). Being open-minded is, to some extent, synonymous with paying attention to one's thoughts and feelings without judging them. The characteristic of nonjudgment in conceptualizations of team mindfulness may strengthen the effects of being open-minded on reducing false consensus.

The considerations above give rise to the assertion that teams are better able to adapt to, shape and select different perspectives, as well as to better consider and integrate intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interests when they are mindful. The following proposition is thus advanced:

Proposition 1: Team mindfulness positively moderates the ability of open-mindedness to reduce false consensus.

Why team mindfulness strengthens the ability of participation to reduce false consensus

Employee participation encompasses the range of mechanisms used to involve the workforce in decisions at all levels of the organization (Wilkinson, Gollan, Marchington & Lewin, 2010). It typically refers to the conscious involvement of lower-level employees in decisions and processes typically carried out by individuals positioned higher in organizational hierarchies. Participative processes are considered essential to unleashing the potential of specialized and useful knowledge that is typically distributed throughout modern

organizations. Moreover, employees are generally thought to prefer participation over centralized decision-making processes, and to respond positively to increased levels of participation. In part, this preference for participative processes is theorized to stem from the association between participation in decision processes and decision control (Konovsky, 2000). Participation concerns delegation of decision-making authority, and employees that are invited to participate in a decision-making process are granted a certain level of control over the decision outcome.

We deliberately claim that team leaders who facilitate participation and structure the process are more likely to develop appropriate and multiple opinions than team leaders who apply authority. It is as if the facilitation of participation seems to necessitate a high degree of attentive presence, and concentrating on the purpose in the present moment is essential (Barry & Meisiek, 2010). Moreover, participation concerns being totally aware and present when engaging in an activity. This is an issue of practical relevance, because it involves throwing oneself completely into an activity as a leader and releasing all judgments. Participation thus forces the team leader to direct attention to what is going on in the team environment (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Team member involvement, however, does not always work as intended. Even when team members are formally invited to participate in a decision, they sometimes experience the process as lacking authenticity, i.e., they feel that their actual influence on the decision-making process and its outcome is minimal. This is particularly the case when organizations move from centralized to participative processes. The situation may lead to few opportunities for team members to apply specialized knowledge in the process, as well as to low perceived levels of decision control. This lack of authenticity may be rooted in team members' perception that their opinions and preferences are not listened to by other team members, in particular the team leader (Lines & Selart, 2013). Accordingly, a small body of literature has

suggested that participation has only a minimal impact on productivity and a modest association with employee attitudes. We propose that, for participation to work as a means of reducing false consensus, a certain level of team mindfulness is required. In low-mindfulness teams, participation will not reach a sufficient level of authenticity to have the effect of reducing false consensus. In contrast, in high-mindfulness teams, the differences in opinions and preferences that are revealed as team members work together on an issue are detected, which leads to a more accurate estimate of the similarities and differences among team members. The following proposition is given:

Proposition 2: Team mindfulness positively moderates the ability of participation to reduce false consensus.

Why team mindfulness strengthens the ability of empowerment to reduce false consensus

A central question that arises when teams apply a consensus rule is the following: When (under what conditions) is the process likely to drift towards false consensus, and when is it likely to move towards shared understanding? Our answer to this question must be semi-prescriptive. Because there is pressure to conform in consensus decisions, the balance between failure and success may be quite fragile. The team, however, may be able to play an important role in directing itself away from false consensus. In short, under dominant directives, teams may not feel ownership over the process or develop the requisite social interaction mechanisms for establishing consensus. In contrast, empowerment is more likely to create an atmosphere that is conducive to a free exchange of ideas and open communication. This context would better elicit internalized agreement, interpretations, and meanings.

Notably, the views of every team member are particularly important when reducing false consensus. Information attributed to an empowered critical member is processed more

extensively than information attributed to a majority. However, it is crucial to make a distinction between the quality and the quantity of attention (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). The importance of empowered minority views does not necessarily reside in the views themselves, but in the fact that their perspectives force other group members to reconsider their own viewpoints and frames of reference.

There is mounting evidence that, in the empowering moment, the critical team member is mindful and acts in a manner consistent with how he or she wishes to behave. When this occurs, there is often a surge of positive feeling. This feeling is reinforcing and frequently leads to further team change. Moreover, it helps the critical team member to view the situation as an opportunity to learn, grow and evolve, and to leverage it as means of moving forward in the most optimal way.

Empowerment may also affect the preferences used by the team. In almost every case, team members do not develop their preferences in social isolation, but in interaction with others who are engaged directly or indirectly in the same endeavours. Comparatively straightforward instances of this process occur when team members enact the environments that they face in dialogues and stories. As team members speak, it helps them to understand what they think and provides a means of organizing their experiences, as well as controlling and predicting events (Weick, 1995; Abolafia, 2010). In addition, team leaders will benefit from ensuring that team members present the issues in an intelligent manner, and that the perspectives that members are voicing are both adequate and updated.

Recent research has revealed that critical thinking is strengthened by empowering critical views in the team when high levels of reflection are present (De Dreu, 2002). In such situations, team members reflect more deeply upon the team's objections, strategies and processes, and make necessary adjustments to the environment. As a result, a high level of

team reflexivity often implies that empowered opinions are voiced and discussed in the team. The following proposition is thus advanced:

Proposition 3: Team mindfulness positively moderates the ability of empowerment to reduce false consensus.

Why team mindfulness strengthens the ability of conflict management to reduce false consensus

Viewed in these terms, almost all creation of meaning in teams is governed by perceptions related to ideologies, paradigms, and organizations. More specifically, it is not unusual for various team members to argue for their views and attempt to influence the development of the intersubjective creation of meaning. Occasionally, differences in opinion may lead to the emergence of conflicts in teams. Indeed, it is in these situations that conceptualizations of team mindfulness are most relevant. It was recently shown that team mindfulness (1) is negatively related to team relationship conflict, (2) weakens the connection between task conflict and relationship conflict at the team level, and (3) diminishes the cross-level spill-over of team relationship conflict, such as individuals socially undermining one another (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

The team's ability to foster constructive conflict appears to be critical, as well. Such conflict plays a central role in how groups manage important decisions. It follows that these conflicts can be healthy and useful if they are structured, focused, and conducted in a spirit of mutual respect. If this is not the case, however, conflicts can be counterproductive and deleterious to the team's mission. Consequently, it is prudent for leadership teams to skilfully foster constructive conflicts regarding the issues at hand. In fact, constructive conflict, i.e., open, frank, and even combative dialogue in which major points of difference and conflicting views are discussed among all team members in an open forum, should be encouraged. This is

an issue of pragmatic significance, because teams compare the different assumptions, facts, and reasons used to support conflicting positions.

Thus far, we have proceeded under the assumption that, in order to manage these constructive conflicts, teams usually need to establish guiding rules to promote productive debate. If nothing else, dialectical inquiry can be applied, in which team members are, for example, instructed to discuss the dangers or risks that they perceive. In other words, the goal is to create an environment in which team members can express doubts and criticism without fear of aggression or anger from the team. It is worth adding that teams that use a structured conflict-enhancing dialectical inquiry produce a higher degree of consensus on the decision, a higher individual acceptance of the decision, and higher member satisfaction with the team (Priem & Muir, 1995). There is also frequently an overestimation of the construal gap between the modal views of two sides in a controversy or conflict. Interestingly, the amount of common ground that could serve as a basis for reconciliation and constructive action is often underestimated (Pronin, Puccio, & Ross, 2002).

It is particularly interesting to note that team mindfulness does not necessarily entail the suppression of conflict or critical thinking. Initially, team mindfulness implies that knowledge and ideas are shared first, at the same time that team members have the opportunity to understand perspectives. This touches on a vital principle: Before critique and judgment actively are chosen and executed, points of view must be offered (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018).

Some classic studies of conflict management may also inform conceptualizations of team mindfulness. For instance, recent research has revealed that, when team mindfulness is high, the connection between task conflict and relationship conflict is diminished (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). A plausible explanation for this is that present-focused attention reduces contamination of the task and personal cues. Present-focused attention also makes

conflicts appear less defensive and ego-driven, which results in lowered feelings of oppositional intensity and negative emotionality. Both of these factors appear to be important in reducing conflicts (see also Weingart, Behfar, Bendersky, Todorova, & Jehn, 2015).

Therefore, the following proposition is given:

Proposition 4: Team mindfulness positively moderates the ability of conflict management to reduce false consensus.

Why team mindfulness strengthens the ability of value and ambiguity tolerance to reduce false consensus

We argue that value and ambiguity tolerance is a key feature and an outcome of team mindfulness practice. We would not stress this, but most mindful teams recognize that the human ability to process information has limitations, and this awareness allows them to develop a skill for detecting patterns in teams that change over time (Sternberg, 1990, 2000). This affects team practices, because teams that apply value and ambiguity tolerance have an ability to understand and come to terms with the paradoxes, contradictions, and changes that occur in a team. Accordingly, such teams realize that to gain tolerance, they must mindfully experience the situation with all of its opportunities and threats. This, in turn, requires experience (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001).

We suggest that the key characteristic of such teams is the ability to understand contradictory signals and stimuli, and interpret them in sensible and holistic ways (Sternberg, 1990, 2000). In terms of style, they are considerate of others, seek just solutions, recognize their mistakes, and strive to learn from them. Most importantly, they possess a unique ability to perceive clues and make sense of continuous interactions with others (Sternberg, 2000).

We propose that value and ambiguity tolerance is the disciplined intellectual process of evaluating situations or ideas, and making appropriate judgments or taking certain actions. It also constitutes a structured intellectual process that team members utilize to objectively

examine ideas, assumptions, knowledge, and reasoning in order to determine their logic and validity, and to choose a course of thought or action (Emiliani, 2000; Rerup, 2005; Levinthal & Rerup, 2006).

We conjecture that teams applying value and ambiguity tolerance can sometimes be characterized as simultaneously very logical and very sceptical towards the knowledge on which logical propositions are built (Sternberg, 1990, 2000). It is obvious that such teams possess features that are commonly associated with experience. Mindful teams have a unique ability to select relevant facts and interpret them with careful and logical critical thinking (Malan & Krieger, 1998). It follows that this understanding makes value- and ambiguity-tolerant teams better able to recognize and deal with uncertainty, because they perceive the shortcomings of reason-based thinking (Emiliani, 2000; Rerup, 2005; Levinthal & Rerup, 2006; Liberman & Trope, 1998; Mohammed, 2001). The following proposition is thus advanced:

Proposition 5: Team mindfulness positively moderates the ability of value and ambiguity tolerance to reduce false consensus.

Discussion

Perhaps the most important novel feature of this study is its examination of team mindfulness as a moderator between the five independent variables (i.e., open-mindedness, participation, empowerment, conflict management, and tolerance) and the reduction of false consensus. This innovative approach is broader and more systematic than those employed by previous studies, which have typically limited themselves to the study of only one of the independent variables in relation to conceptualizations of team mindfulness. For example, the recent study by Yu and Zellmer-Bruhn (2018) addressed only the relationship between conflict management and team mindfulness.

This article contributes a conceptual foundation that can be utilized in future theoretical and empirical research on team mindfulness in organizations. The introduced five propositions thus serve as a basis for further research and development of team mindfulness in organizational settings. P1 focuses on the ability of team mindfulness to positively moderate the relationship between open-mindedness and the reduction of false consensus. P2 focuses on the ability of team mindfulness to positively moderate the relationship between participation and the reduction of false consensus. P3 focuses on the ability of team mindfulness to positively moderate the relationship between empowerment and the reduction of false consensus. P4 focuses on the ability of team mindfulness to positively moderate the relationship between conflict management and the reduction of false consensus. Finally, P5 focuses on the ability of team mindfulness to positively moderate the relationship between value/ambiguity tolerance and the reduction of false consensus

We argue that the presence of team mindfulness is central to the production of consensus in teams. When the interdependence of team members is high, the development of a kind of collective reasoning grounded in collective interaction may arise (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006; 2007). When these members engage in interactions with others, intersubjective meaning, which is characterized by a common understanding of the process, often emerges. Through this process, individual opinions are linked together into intersubjective frameworks. It is likely that cognitively meaningful structures have a strong influence on how team mindfulness unfolds. Such structures may also play a major role in how organizational problems are defined and solved. Indeed, they are thought to operate at many different levels in an organization, from individual to intersubjective levels (see Nederveen, Pieterse, van Knippenberg, & van Ginkel, 2011; Schippers, Homan, & van Knippenberg, 2013).

At the core of the mindful approach is the belief that difficult and uncertain aspects of the situation should be dealt with using less rationality and control than our modern inclinations prescribe (Weick et al., 1999; McKenna, Rooney, & Boal, 2009). In other words, we might gain more control over time if we are willing to accept less control in the short term. This approach may be difficult for many team members to embrace, and it therefore requires faith, confidence, humility, and courage. In numerous ways, conceptualizations of team mindfulness represent an alternative to management's creation of large, arcane knowledge systems in an effort to gain control. Team mindfulness does require knowledge, but not at the expense of ethics, judgment, creativity, and other forms of human intellection. The reason for this is that the mindful approach acknowledges not only human cognitive limitations, but also the relativity of knowledge, perception, and truth. In this way, it becomes an asset for teams.

Theoretical Implications

We identify several differences between our proposed model of team mindfulness and previous models:

First, our model focuses on team members' preoccupation with failure, which implies that attention is given to team failure related to technology, existing procedures, and operations (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). The perspective taken is that new situations comprise a multitude of novelties, and that a routine-like approach must therefore be avoided. The reason for this is that routines involve unnecessary risk-taking (Weick et al., 1999). As a result, an important feature of the mindful team is its ability to anticipate unexpected situations. Team mindfulness is to be considered an asset for teams who want to abandon routines in order to apply more general decision rules (Cyert & March, 1963; Weick et al., 1999; Gavetti, Greve, Levinthal, & Ocasio, 2012). It should be noted that Cyert and March, already in their seminal book from 1963, established a clear distinction between routines and general decision rules, the latter requiring a greater degree of team mindfulness (Weick et al., 1999; Levinthal &

Rerup, 2006; Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Feldman, 2000). It is therefore not a surprise that mindful teams most often favour improvisation and adaptation over routine. This implies coping with problems as they occur, and fostering a positive attitude towards opportunistic learning that results from small mistakes and surprises (Butler & Gray, 2006).

Second, central to our model is a focus on the unwillingness among mindful team members to simplify interpretations, explanations, and experiences of the team (Swanson & Ramiller, 2004). The unwillingness to simplify in many ways constitutes a strategy among mindful teams ensuring that different perspectives are applied to team problems, fostering the team to take notice, to be sceptical, and to double-check critical issues (Butler & Gray, 2006). The mindful team needs different viewpoints since a complex system is necessary to sense a complex environment (Weick et al., 1999).

Third, our model stresses that the mindful team most often develops an advanced level of situational awareness that results in a sensitivity to its current operations (Weick et al., 1999). A conceptualization is frequently made of the mindful team's situation and operational status. Consequently, it is crucial for the mindful team to create an awareness of its internal relationships and dependencies. This awareness is imperative in order for the mindful team to capture how the work performed should be managed. Mindful team members that are highly sensitive to the situation perceive the connections within the team clearly, with all of the complexity that is present. Collective storytelling and shared mental representations are thus often employed in order to develop such sensitivity in the team (Weick et al., 1999).

Fourth, our model suggests a reduction of false consensus, since it implies that expertise should loom larger than formal authority in team decision-making. The implication of this is that team structure and rank should be subordinated to experience and expertise (Weick et al., 1999). This view is in accordance with theorists that argue that team members who are highly central within a team (formal leaders with authority) are more likely than

those who are less central to overestimate social support for their views. Team members in control over the information flow of their team due to authority and position thus often incorrectly assume that their judgments are in line with the majority of their team members (Flynn & Wiltermuth, 2010).

Practical Implications

Focusing on mindfulness at the team level has several consequences for practitioners. An important practical implication of our conceptualization is the prevention of counterproductive interpersonal team outcomes, which can be very expensive. As mentioned in the first section, individual mindfulness can be trained, and such training may assist team members to improve their teamwork (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). We suggest that team mindfulness training may enhance positive influences on interpersonal teamwork.

Recent research indicates that mindfulness training has a greater impact on slow, effortful, deliberate, and reflective thinking (System 2) than on intuitive thinking, which relies on impressions, associations, feelings, intentions, and preparations for action (System 1) (Kahneman, 2011). The implication of this is that mindfulness training in teams has a great potential of reducing biases and errors in judgment (Simon, 1961, 1967, 1982; Kahneman, 2011; Kahneman, Lovallo, & Sibony, 2011, 2019). Team members can thus use conscious System 2 reflection, powered by mindfulness, in order to identify mistakes arising from rapid unconscious System 1.

We assert that most team decision-making in organizations takes the form of a routine. The key characteristics of an organizational routine are that it is repetitive, recognizable, comprises an independent pattern of action, and involves multiple actors (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006, 2007). Routine-based reliability in organizations frequently involves the application of decision-making rules and related activities that facilitate the execution of standard operations and decision-making (Butler & Gray, 2006; Bouquet & Birkinshaw, 2011; Winter, 2013; Foss

& Pedersen, 2014; Buckley & Casson, 2019). Such routines may be unique to the organization or more widely acknowledged in the industry. The main objective of routines is to reduce or eliminate situated human cognition as a cause of error.

Underpinning this discussion, though, is a deeper issue. Although team decision-making may function relatively well as an organizational routine in certain situations, it often produces false consensus (Whyte, 1989; Gersick & Hackman, 1990). Team mindfulness has the capacity to remedy this problem when applied as a forceful moderator. This is because team mindfulness – contrary to organizational routines – promotes highly situated human cognition as the solution to reliability problems in the organization (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; Butler & Gray, 2006). Due to its nature as a fixed structure, routinized decision-making most often results in team inertia, inflexibility, and mindlessness. However, training programs for decision-making teams can be tailored, such that mindful thinking becomes a natural part of team decision-making processes that normally take the form of an organizational routine. Such programs are likely to have a positive effect on the reduction of false consensus. Nevertheless, some organizational scientists implicitly stress team mindfulness as an important driver of change and development in the field of organizational routines (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Valorinta, 2009; Carlo, Lyytinen., & Boland, 2012).

Limitations and Future Research

In this final section, we address some shortcomings of the present framework and offer suggestions for future research. For example, research could investigate whether, how, and when a combination of team mindfulness and individual mindfulness can influence the production of false consensus (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). Empirical multiwave field studies are thus needed to validate the suggested mechanism. In addition, we propose the use of qualitative interviews, as well as automated text analysis of organizational documents, to gauge team attention patterns. The challenge here is to analyse the variable nature of the

interaction between team mindfulness and false consensus. We contend that, as team members shift between individual and team mindfulness, they may increase or decrease their capacity for reducing false consensus. This conception opens up compelling directions for future research across many different empirical subareas.

Future studies also need to develop a more refined understanding of the relationship between conceptualizations of team mindfulness and attention in the production of false consensus. For example, it is not yet known how the attentional subsystems of alerting, orienting, and conflict monitoring (Fan, McCandliss, Sommer, Raz, & Posner, 2002) are influenced over time by team mindfulness (see also Weber & Johnson, 2009, for a review on mindful judgment and decision-making). This question is a crucially important dimension of the study of team mindfulness. The task is to identify the conditions under which team mindfulness can affect different forms of attention. The seminal research of Yu and Zellmer-Bruhn (2018) indicates that the subsystem of conflict monitoring is positively affected by team mindfulness.

This question can also be addressed by focusing on how conceptualizations of team mindfulness relate to emotions. In a more reconstructive vein, team mindfulness plays the role of an emotion regulator. Future research should therefore focus on how team mindfulness relates to emergent affective states in the consensus process. There are some indications that team mindfulness may induce positive feelings in the team, and that this may influence the ability to think and reason critically. This insight using emotion theory could be leveraged by describing how conceptualizations of team mindfulness contribute to the development of a variety of feelings.

Finally, we urge the different camps of mindfulness research to cooperate more closely and learn from one another in order to advance scientific research. For example, organizational scientists have primarily advocated the idea that conceptualizations of team

mindfulness are a result of organizational structure and culture (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006, 2007), whereas the primary objective of health scientists has been to test different training techniques as possible antecedents in models of team mindfulness (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2018). New research agendas that capitalize on both traditions are needed to improve the understanding of the relationship between conceptualizations of team mindfulness and decision-making processes. Such a multimethod approach is likely to facilitate a thorough testing of the mechanism suggested in the present article.

Conclusion

Although mindfulness has several beneficial effects on individual decision-making processes, it can also facilitate decision-making at the team level. In this theoretical article, we argue that conceptualizations of team mindfulness have a determining effect on the reduction of false consensus because it may counteract people's general tendency to view alternative approaches to existing circumstances as inappropriate. In itself, team mindfulness does not guarantee healthy consensus processes. When coupled with other factors, however, it may be able to add significant value. The five propositions derived from our analysis indicate when team mindfulness can be successful in reducing false consensus. The analysis has practical value for practitioners engaged in the improvement of team decision processes.

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Figure Caption

Figure 1. The moderating effects of team mindfulness on determining false consensus.

